

## What you should think about concerning food if you have, or are at risk of, iron deficiency.

Iron deficiency is the commonest nutritional deficiency, both in the western world and globally. You can reduce the risk of iron deficiency by eating properly.

**Haem iron and non-haem iron.** There are two types of iron in food: haem iron and non-haem iron. The body absorbs haem iron considerably better than non-haem iron. As much as 5 times better in fact. Different foods also contain different amounts of haem and non-haem iron. Iron is not affected by cooking in a microwave, grilling, boiling etc.

Meat contains both haem and non-haem iron. The darker the meat, such as game, beef or lamb, the greater the proportion of haem iron. While lighter meat, such as chicken, contains a smaller proportion of haem iron.

Fruit, vegetables and grains (flour and flakes) contain only non-haem iron.

**The meat factor.** The meat factor is an undefined factor found in meat, fish and shellfish. The meat factor helps to stimulate the absorption of both haem and non-haem iron. This means if you eat meat or fish together with vegetables, the meat factor helps you to absorb the iron in meat, vegetables, fruit and grains better.

**Vegetables, fruit and grains.** Vegetables, fruit and grains contain only non-haem iron, which is not absorbed as easily as haem iron. But of course they contain many other vital substances. Vegetables and fruit also contain vitamin C, which helps to stimulate the absorption of iron.

By eating a balanced diet, you get all the nutrients that your body needs

**Iron absorption can be stimulated or inhibited by various substances found in food.**



- Vitamin C
- The meat factor

Substances in food that inhibit the absorption of iron in food are:



- Calcium
- Coffee
- Tea
- Phytic acid (found in wholemeal grains)

It can be an advantage to avoid the things that inhibit the absorption of iron with lunch or dinner. Instead, drink milk, coffee or tea with breakfast or between meals.

When wholemeal bread is baked as sourdough, the phytic acid is digested and the iron in the bread is more easily absorbed.

**Vegetarians.** You can get all the iron your body needs even if you do not eat meat. Choose vegetables that contain more iron, such as peas and legumes (beans). And it is even more important to avoid the foods with substances that inhibit the absorption of iron.

## Our daily iron requirement, according to the Nordic nutrition recommendations, NNR:

Women: **15 mg** Men and women after the fertile period: **9 mg**.



During pregnancy, the iron requirement increases considerably and can often not be satisfied through the diet alone.

We absorb haem iron more easily than non-haem iron. But on average we absorb about 10% of the iron in the food.

Iron from our food is needed to replace the iron we lose from bleeding and rejection.

The table shows the total iron content, i.e. both haem and non-haem iron, in different foods. The value shown is for 100 grams of the edible part of all foods. The information has been obtained from the National Food Administration's database.

Game		Offal		Pork	
Reindeer	2.8 mg	Black pudding	17.0 mg	Fillet	1.45 mg
Venison	3.0 mg	Pork liver*	18.7 mg	Chops	1.45 mg
Elk steak	3.79 mg	Beef liver*	9.4 mg	Stewing cuts	1.48 mg
Beef		Poultry		Shellfish and eggs	
Sirloin	2.2 mg	Chicken	0.9 mg	Mussels without liquid	7.4 mg
Stewing cuts	2.3 mg	Breast fillet	0.72 mg	Prawns	3.1 mg
Prime rib	2.4 mg	Thigh fillet	1.04 mg	Crayfish	0.75 mg
Roast beef	2.6 mg	Turkey	0.8 mg	Eggs	0.68 mg
Fish		Uncooked grains		Nuts	
Salmon	0.8 mg	Bulgur	2.46 mg	Hazelnuts	3.6 mg
Cod	0.12 mg	Couscous	1.08 mg	Almonds	5.2 mg
Haddock	0.5 mg	Oatmeal	5.3 mg	Coconut	3.3 mg
Mackerel	0.65 mg	Jasmin rice	0,0 mg	Walnuts	2.1 mg
Vegetables		Fruit		Berries	
Broccoli	0.66 mg	Apricots	0.5 mg	Raspberries	1.1 mg
Green peas	2.0 mg	Dried apricots	6.0 mg	Strawberries	0.34 mg
Spinach	2.0 mg	Apples	0.14 mg	Blueberries	0.6 mg
Green beans	1.0 mg	Pears	0.18 mg	Lingon berries	0.4 mg
Jerusalem artichokes	3.4 mg	Kiwi	0.3 mg	Cranberries	0,7 mg
Potato	0.36 mg	Bananas	0.4 mg	Currants	0.67 mg
Peas/lentils		Seeds		Flour	
Chick peas, dry	6.9 mg	Linseed	5.73 mg	Wheat flour	0.7 mg
Lentils, dry	6.8 mg	Pumpkin seeds	15.0 mg	Potato flour	0.5 mg
Brown beans, dry	5.0 mg	Sesame seeds	7.8 mg	Graham whole grain	5.0 mg
Brown beans, cooked	1.84 mg	Sunflower seeds	6.8 mg	Rye flour whole grain	3.3 mg

\* During pregnancy, you should avoid eating liver. Because of the high vitamin A content. On the other hand, liver pate can be eaten during pregnancy.